No. 8. - 8 pages. See Pol. & Cit, 10–11, 16, 17–18 for the 2 methods of procedure 9

Indictment of the Rev. Mark B. Grier for Baptizing and Receiving Into Christian Communion Persons Known by Him to be Living at the Time in a State of Polygamy.

In the name of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the Rev. Mark B. Grier, being a minister of the said church and a missionary thereof at Hsuchoufu Station, China, and a member of the South Carolina Presbytery of the Synod of South Carolina, of the aforesaid Presbyterian Church in the United States, is herein, by this indictment, charged—

Charges.

1. In the first place, with having administered the sacrament of baptism to an adult Chinaman known by the Rev. Mark B. Grier to be living in a state of polygamy at the time of the said baptism, and who, moreover, had persistently refused to renounce his polygamy and conform to the law of monogamy; and also—

2. In the second place, the aforesaid Rev. Mark B. Grier is herein charged with having received into fellowship and Christian communion, another Chinaman who had been baptized years before by a Baptist minister and was known to have lived thereafter and to be living at the time of this his reception into Christian fellowship in a state of polygamy.

Document.

What is deemed an adequate ground of these charges may be found in the following document which is herewith submitted as evidence for the consideration of the court. This document is a letter written by the Rev. Mark B. Grier, the respondent in this case, which reached me through our Foreign Mission Office in answer to inquiries instituted by myself and forwarded by this office to missionaries in the field. I wish to thank the Rev. Principal Grier for it, and to state that it is the basis of instituting this suit, not for the purpose of eliciting any censorious and exemplary condemnation of the persons involved in these transactions narrated, but to evoke a judicial and formal deliverance on the

merits of the questions at issue by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to which the case may be carried up by appeal.

NASHVILLE, *Nov. 27th,* 1906.

Rev. S. S. LAWS, D. D.,
1733 *Q. St. N. W., Washington, D. C.*

DEAR DR. LAWS: I have received a letter from Rev. M. B. Grier of Hsuchoufu Station, China, of which I send you a copy in so far as it relates to polygamy, which was the subject of inquiry in answer to which the letter was written.

Fraternally and truly yours,

S. H. CHESTER, *Sec'y.*

"Copy."

HSUCHOUFU, CHINA, *Oct. 20th,* 1906.

Rev. S. H. CHESTER, D. D., *Nashville, Tenn.*

DEAR SIR: Yours of Sept. 4th, to hand. In it you wish me to give you for Dr. Laws' information, "exactly the number and names of churches connected with our Missions which have polygamous members and the number of such members."

[*Item* 1.]—Without taking time to communicate with each of the stations, I think that I am entirely correct when I say that there is only one station in the North Kiangsu Mission at which there are polygamous Christians, and that station is Hsuchoufu. There is only one member of the North Kiangsu Mission who has been guilty of actually baptizing a polygamist and that is myself. The total number that I have baptized is one. This is a man fifty odd years of age, who took his second wife years before he became acquainted with the Gospel. He lives about sixty miles from this city. When our evangelists visited his place in their preaching tours, he became interested in the Gospel and as *he is a man of some means,* he came at intervals, for several years to our station, remaining several weeks at a time, at his own expense, for the sole purpose of studying the Bible. He applied for baptism and was repeatedly refused on the ground of his polygamous relations. He was persistent in his application during two or three years. Through all this time we were able to discover absolutely no unworthy motive in his desire to enter the Church. Finally, not being able to justify myself, *either on Scriptural or other grounds, either in compelling* him to discard the woman whom he had taken or in longer refusing him the rite of baptism, I did with the

approval of Mr. Grafton and Dr. MacFayden (Mr. White having left the station) administer the same.

It may be worth while, in passing, in order that all the facts may be before Dr. Laws, to state that a few months previous to this baptism, one of our most trusted and valuable members had taken, during our absence for the summer, a second wife. On our return he was promptly and publicly excommunicated. In order, therefore, that the position of the church might be made perfectly plain on this important subject, I took occasion at the time of this baptism, to state to the entire congregation the grounds of our action in both cases. The distinction is fundamental and one that the Chinese readily recognize and heartily assent to.

[*Item* 2.]—This, then, is the history of the only case which, so far as my information goes, has ever been baptized by a Southern Presbyterian Missionary in the North Kiangsu Mission, or in the entire China Mission. There is, however, another case which should be mentioned. It is that of an old man who was baptized about twenty years ago by the lamented Mr. Jones of the English Baptist Mission of Shantung, who formerly worked this territory. The man was left with but little instruction and afterwards (very soon after we opened Hsuchoufu) he took a second wife, claiming when remonstrated with, that he did not know it was contrary to the rule of the church. He was suspended for a year or more and then upon a public acknowledgement of his error he was *re-admitted to communion without* being compelled to discard his wife. *We could not be sure* that he was ignorant when he took this second wife but we accepted his statement and restored him on that basis. While, therefore, none of us are responsible for his baptism *we are responsible for allowing him to commune with us.* There are no other polygamists in connection with this station nor any other station of our Mission, so far as I know.

["I authorize you to sign my name to letter.—M. B. Grier." Wired me September 9, 1907, from Due West, S. C., on reading this charge.] ☞The italics in Grier's letter are mine.

(End of the Grier letter.)

And now the South Carolina Presbytery, of which the Rev. Mark B. Grier is a member, is hereby and herein notified that it is charged on this evidence that the said Rev. Mark B. Grier did, in these proceedings, narrated by himself, act contrary to the word of God as interpreted in the standards of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. and *"against the peace, unity, and purity of the Church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King and Head thereof"* (Book C. O., § 164).

As defined in the Book of Church Order, chapter III. 1, par. 152: "An offense, the proper object of judicial process, is anything in the principles or practice of a church member professing faith in Christ which is contrary to the word of God. * * * Nothing, therefore, ought to be considered by any church court as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture, as interpreted in these standards."

In a judicial case it is not permissible to dissent from the standards as the authoritative exposition of God's word. And on the subject of polygamy, which is the *gravamen* of this charge and case, it is proposed to cite two passages from these standards which are so explicit in setting forth the law of our church, which law inexorably binds every one of our church courts and individual church members, lay or clerical, so plainly and unequivocably as to preclude the need of argument and render comment superfluous:

1st. Confession of Faith, chapter XXIV., on Marriage and Divorce, section one is in these words:

"Marriage is to be between one man and one woman; neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time."

2nd. This is buttressed by the answer to Q. 139 of the Larger Catechism. I quote:

"What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment? Answer. The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are adultery, fornication, etc., having more wives or husbands than one at the same time."

It may be remarked that this is the doctrine of even natural religion, and not simply of Christianity. As the Savior expounds it, the conjugal relation of one man and one woman was ordained at creation for the race of man, and, therefore, every departure therefrom by even the heathen is sinful, though it be a sin of ignorance. And the Christ did not claim to originate monogamy, but proclaimed it as God's original and universal law, and sanctified it as the law of His spiritual kingdom.

(See Bible Argument, chapters IX and X of "Polygamy and Citizenship in Church and State," by S. S. Laws, with the supplement entitled "Foreign Missions.")

In the document submitted above as the undergirding of this case the facts are so clearly, frankly, and fully stated by the respondent himself as to preclude the necessity of citing witnesses; and for a like reason there is no occasion for any delay in entering on the trial, it being understood that the respondent proposes to enter a plea of defense, of which it is presumed that notice or an abstract may at once be given and the plea *in extenso* be presented at any stage in the course of the appeal at his discretion.

As the transactions narrated and the disciplinary irregularities alleged are manifestly not of a private but of a public nature, and as they pertain to a confessedly sinful relation which implies personal and family sinfulness or licentiousness, and must have an important bearing on the peace, purity, and prosperity of the Christian religion and especially on the Church of God among the heathen, and also in Christian lands, it seems to be not only the right but the duty of the Presbytery without further investigation or delay, to institute process in the exercise of its original jurisdiction as in such cases provided and in duty bound.

Book of Church Order, Pars. 62, 162, 163, 166, 60, 90, 173, 174, 191, etc.

All of which is respectfully submitted to the South Carolina Presbytery of the Synod of South Carolina aforesaid by Samuel Spahr Laws, a member of the Presbytery of Chesapeake of the Synod of Virginia, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, who will ever pray that the great Head of the Church, who promised to be with His Church till the end of the world, will by His Spirit so guide all those whose duty it shall be to consider and to act in this important case that the conclusion attained and the deliverance made shall aid in conserving the purity and increasing the power of the Gospel of the Son of God in all lands, for all time.

SAMUEL SPAHR LAWS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., 1733 Q STREET, N. W.,
September 10, 1907.

Supplementary Memoranda.

1. As to the part taken by Rev. Mark B. Grier in these transactions, it is respectfully suggested that two things should be borne in mind: One is that his acts were not strictly individual, but were in concurrence with associated brethren. Although he may be willing, as he says, to take the entire responsibility, still none of us should consent to that. The other mitigating circumstance is that neither his Presbytery nor the General Assembly had been called on to make any previous deliverance for guidance otherwise, on the subject. Some allowance may reasonably be made also for obliviousness of constitutional requirements and the difficulty and impracticability of individual missionaries satisfactorily wrestling with the original applications of the same to new cases and situations.

2. But it should not be overlooked that while this condition of things mitigates the gravity of the personal irregularities, it magnifies the importance of the General Assembly's calmly and deliberately formulating a constitutional deliverance without further delay. Not individual missionaries, nor mission stations, nor inferior courts are competent to effectively dispose of such constitutional problems, but only the General Assembly. This suggests an appeal, in any event, to the General Assembly for decision, and perhaps the Synod may consent to its being direct as provided in par 259, Book Church Order.

Were this concrete case allowed to stand unchallenged and unrectified as a *precedent*, it is deemed the anticipation of calmness and sobriety that its influence would be so baleful as to be subversive of the fundamental principles of our church order and authority. It would breed ecclesiastical anarchy.

All our church courts have their duties as well as their rights, and when duty points the way, that is the end of discretion and expediency. (Book C. O., ch. XII, sec. 2, 247-254.) Missionaries, like other Christian workers, go into their fields not to do Christ's thinking, but to obey His

orders. A railroad superintendent ordered a bumper placed in the St. Louis depot of the North Missouri Railroad, and directed the laborer to sink the beam five feet. Noticing that the man was tamping it in at three feet, he asked him why he did not sink it five feet. The man answered that he found the ground so hard that he thought three feet was enough. The angered superintendent abruptly discharged him, with the emphatic remark: "I did not employ you to do my thinking, but to obey my orders." Ministers and missionaries, like all other laborers for Christ, are not to do His thinking, but to obey His orders, and our church standards are to us as a church the scriptural definition and prescription of his orders, and on no subject are these orders more explicit than on the conjugal relation as that of monogamy to the entire exclusion of simultaneous so-called polygamy.

3. It is surprisingly noticeable that the polygamous case of baptism, as the narrative shows us, was not a case of ignorance at all, but of persistent refusal to listen to the instruction of the missionary. At last the polygamist prevailed over the missionary. Heathenism gained the day. By such a course Christianity would be heathenized rather than heathenism Christianized. Who knows whereunto this would grow, unchecked? The simple truth is that when the missionary has once pointed out to a heathen Christ's law of monogamy he can no longer plead ignorance of the sin of polygamy, nor refuse to renounce it as a follower of Christ.

4. In the fourth place, the case of excommunication mentioned was doubtless right and proper, but the reasoning in regard to it is clearly at fault. The *fact* of polygamy, by common consent, is to be reckoned a *sin* in all cases; and the application of different and unequal rules which make fish of one polygamist and flesh of another, a sin if entered into after baptism so grave as to incur expulsion, but "permitted to those who had entered into it before baptism"—such ruling is, from the nature of the case, so manifestly unequal and unfair that it is not strange that experienced missionaries reject and deprecate it as working confusion. We are indebted to the Moravians for this wretchedly fallacious prac-

tice, and it is surprising to what extent it has been thoughtlessly accepted and acted on by intelligent missionaries who should know better. But on this matter, and on the subject generally, I must be allowed to refer to "Polygamy and Citizenship," pp. 142-144 and p. 173, etc.

This case of excommunication as given does not relieve the situation, but is enmeshed in the same tangled skein as the other cases.

5. Fifth and finally, may we not reasonably hope that—

1. The courts of our church will so dispose of this case, which challenges their attention, that the proceedings of the Hsuchoufu station, as narrated therein, will not be approved as accordant with our standards, and thus be allowed to stand as a disorganizing and blighting precedent in dealing with this sinful heathen institution or custom, but be pronounced contrary thereto.

2. And as prompted by the issues submitted:

Let our Church Courts and especially the General Assembly say distinctly, without censure on the past, that all our missions and missionaries are instructed henceforth to withhold, not charity nor helpfulness of any kind, but *baptism and church membership and Christian communion from the polygamist, until, by the renunciation of this sin, free to be an example of the Christian life.*

"The relation of the sexes is the touchstone of the purity of the church."

Throughout the Bible, monogamy is the symbol of the union of the true God with Israel and of the Christ with His Bride, the Church, and polygamy of polytheism and idolatry—in the theocracy a treason punishable with death, thus indicating intensely the divine displeasure.

In his recent work on "The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries," the eminent Adolph Harnack, in treating of the early Christian societies, says:

"Monogamy was absolutely held to be the one permissible union of the sexes" (Vol. I, p. 260).

With our present light, to hold otherwise is creditable to neither intelligence nor scholarship. This quotation is an important confirmation of the "unanswerable argument" in "Polygamy and Citizenship" against polygamy in the apostolic churches.

OPEN THOU OUR EYES!!